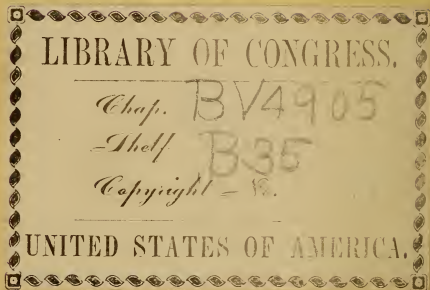
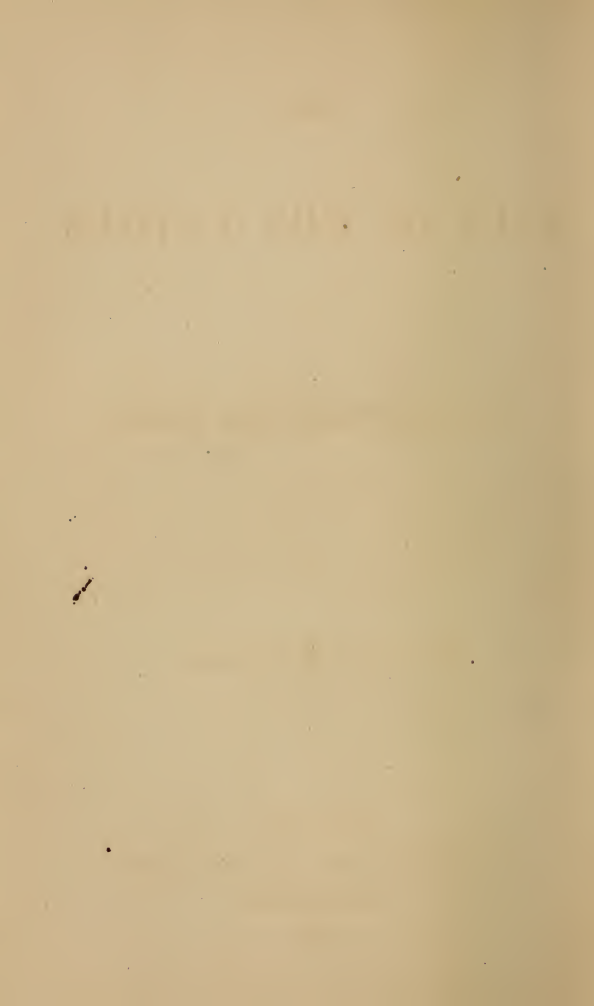


THOUGHTS FOR THE WEARY

2017



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THE
GIFT OF THE FATHER

OR

THOUGHTS FOR THE WEARY.

BY

REV. CHARLES BATTERSBY.



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Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1867,

By REV. CHARLES BATTERSBY,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern
District of New York.

ap 23-15

Respectfully Inscribed

TO

J. B. Cornell, Esq.,

WHOSE

Brightest Record in Eternity will be—

HE WAS A FRIEND TO THE POOR.

BY

THE AUTHOR.

N O T E .

Aside from personal experience, three years' labor for the neglected and destitute is quite sufficient to show that there is a dark side to human life, and that he sadly mistakes his office, who, professedly following the Master, does not constantly seek "to bind up the broken-hearted" as well as "to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." In the preparation of the following pages, the only design was to minister instruction and comfort to those who suffer privation. And if this little book, finding its way to some sorrowful home, bring light and joy to an afflicted heart, the name of the Lord shall be praised.

CONTENTS.



I.

ISRAEL.

II.

THE GIFT OF THE FATHER.

III.

GOD SPEAKING THROUGH HIS SON.

IV.

THE AFFLICTIONS OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

I.

Happy

Art Thou, O Israel:

Who

Is Like Unto Thee!

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I.

ISRAEL

OR

THE BLESSED LOT OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

At the utterance of these words, Moses was about to be separated from his people. Called to a great work, he had well performed his part and was now ready to leave it for his reward. Long years had passed since he exchanged the refinements and splendors of Egyptian palaces for a sterner life in Midian. Then, though a companion of princes, he could not forget the poor Hebrew slave and as cries of the oppressed entered his ears, the mightiest currents of his soul were moved. Fleeing from a land where he was compelled to witness without resenting his brother's wrongs, he made the desert air resound with cries for the promised deliverer. Willingly did he accept privation and suffering with the

people of God, for, moved by a sublime faith, he esteemed the approbation of the Almighty far above the pleasures of sense or the honors of a sinful world.

His prayers were heard and he himself was chosen to be a leader and commander to the people. With a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm, Israel had been brought from a land of thralldom and were now come to the confines of the land to be given them for an inheritance. Moses could not but look back upon the way they had come. The marvelous acts of the Lord Jehovah, graven in unchanged freshness upon his memory, like a grand panorama passed before him. The future appeared—and his great heart yearned for the well-being of his people. He could not say farewell nor ascend old Nebo's heights, until he once more urged the necessity of cleaving unto the true God. Again he sets before them the service of God and its glorious rewards—the way of death and its fearful end. From what God *has* done as well as from what he *is* to do, he draws considera-

tions through which they may be constrained to cleave unto his testimonies. Then upon each of the tribes he pronounces a prophetic blessing and, in conclusion, concerning all Israel declares, "There is none like unto the God of Geshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone; the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy strength, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

God has a people now. These are they who, escaping the bondage of sin, have liberty as well as completion in Him in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead

bodily. And there are many points of resemblance between God's ancient people and the Israel of God that now is; and this resemblance extends from their earliest calling unto their entrance into the promised land. As God once dealt with his chosen overtly and for their temporal good, after the same fashion but secretly and spiritually does he deal with them now. In respect to past, present and future relations and their consequent blessings, of them it may, most appropriately be said—"Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee!"

1. The blessedness of Israel rested upon this foundation—theirs only was the true God.

Other nations had their gods—gods, vain as the minds which conceived them, impotent as the hands that fashioned them. But Israel's God was the maker of the heavens and the earth. The Egyptian might worship the sun and moon—his Isis and Osiris the Hebrew paid homage to the Creator

and Governor of the hosts above. The heathen might bow in shameful degradation to that his own hands could both form and destroy, the chosen of the Lord was exalted while he adored Him who "unchanged through time's all-devastating flight," is the only God!

It is well known that the gods of the heathen, ancient and modern, are, for the most part, only the impersonated and deified passions and lusts of men. No wonder then that the vile inclinations of the natural heart, fostered rather than opposed, should cause the Gentiles to walk in lasciviousness, evil desires, excess of wine, banquetings and abominable idolatries. Nor is it a matter of surprise that God, in looking down from his high and holy abode, should find the hearts of the sons of men, when left to their own inventions, fully set in them to do evil.

The character of God, so well exhibited in the methods of Hebrew worship had a natural tendency to elevate and refine all who became acquainted with it. So that aside from blessings directly bestowed, Israel was a

avored people. And it is a rule easily traced through all ages of the world that national as well as individual prosperity is always commensurate with a knowledge of the true God, a recognition and acknowledgment of his superintending providence and a careful observance of his commands. That was an answer worthy its author given to the heathen prince who, having audience with the good queen of England, desired to know the secret of her country's greatness. Holding in her extended hand a copy of the Word of Life, she replied—This is the secret of our national prosperity; this, by which a knowledge of the true God and a guide for the regulation of our conduct is given! And are not all national calamities traceable to a forgetfulness of God, or a failure to yield obedience to his just demands? What were the plagues, the famines, the captivities of other days—what are the sufferings of the present but means employed that the nations may be brought to know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men and that holi-

ness as well as justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne? "Rightousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people. Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

Happy are ye who through faith are the children of Abraham and heirs according to the promise. From this time forth and even for evermore the great and eternal One is your King. In distress you may cry unto him and he can hear you; you shall call upon him and he will answer you. In weakness he will give you strength, in your foolishness, wisdom. He will cause his glory to surround you and before the glory of his presence all your darkness shall flee away. You need not fear to call forth your highest powers to do him homage, for your loftiest conceptions can never reach the beginning of his greatness. You may confide in his love and trust to his protection, for his love is immeasurable and, shielded by his power, no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper. You

may rejoice in the infinitude of his wisdom, the perfection of his omniscience; not a sparrow can fall to the ground without his notice, nor is there a hair of your head unnumbered. He laid the foundations of the earth and he sustains the pillars which uphold the universe of created things, nor can they be moved but by his command. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Though, through the intensity of their sufferings, men, like Job, have cursed the day they were born into a world of trouble, no one has ever yet been found to

mourn over the day he was born into the kingdom of God. No, dear reader, if belonging to the household of faith, you cannot over-estimate the blessedness of your position for its glory will never decline while eternity endures !

2. The great work committed to their hands made Israel a happy and peculiar people.

Their deliverance and temporal prosperity great in themselves, were only means to a greater end. In revealing himself to them, it was God's purpose to transmit to the surrounding nations the knowledge they themselves possessed. Mankind was to be taught more clearly the character of the true God and the blessed results of a right faith in him. By the excellence of the favors they received as well as by the bright example they were to give, were the nations to be instructed to "praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth and his ways judgment.

Nor did they wholly fail in this. God's

people have always been the light of the world. Like a city set on a hill they have not been hid. The cause which brought faith to the heart of Rahab before she received the spies with peace has operated throughout the whole world to spread a knowledge of the truth and give to the nations a saving trust in God.

Comparing the condition of the world as it was four centuries ago and its condition to-day, how great a change is discovered! What a vast difference in the morals of men and in all those interests infallibly modified by morality! How ignorance has fled before the light of truth! How greatly has superstition given way to clearness and freedom of thought! How have men been brought from the most woeful state of spiritual degradation to walk in the beaming of unobstructed Gospel light! In accordance with God's purpose, the world has been working out its own salvation, and God's people have been the working element. They are the leaven by which the whole lump is to be leavened.

Great as is the work already wrought it is far from completion. Truth, though greatly victorious, has not universal empire. The kingdoms of this world are not all the kingdoms of our Lord. There are immense territories and countless thousands still shrouded in darkness and the shadow of death. God's Word must reach the corners of the earth and penetrate every domain before all men learn to love the Saviour it reveals. And, then, within our own borders, yes at our doors, how very much there is to do. It is not necessary to visit those portions of our cities wholly surrendered to poverty and crime, for evidence is everywhere presented that multitudes are without hope and without God.

And yet our hearts need not be given to discouragement. The work to be done is vast, but is sure of accomplishment. It is *God's* work and he has declared that it shall go on, subduing all opposition, sweeping away every barrier until "the earth shall be full

of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

And there is a glorious work to which the individual is called. Put in trust of an immortal spirit, he has the control of its destinies. Having a place in time, he is passing to eternity, determined by his conduct here, of happiness inconceivable, or of woe unutterable. There are affections in the dust to be trained heavenward. He has a heart full of enmity to be changed and filled with God's love and desire for God's service. There is a vineyard to be cultivated, talents to be improved, patience and watchfulness induced. A child of earth, he is also an heir of heaven; and his discipline must correspond to his high destiny. And as, in the world, God makes his church the instrument of his working, so in the soul-training of man, the individual is co-worker with the divine Spirit.

When we remember the love God manifests for his work in the earth, the interest he has ever exhibited in its development, the nobility of the work itself, the glory which shall

attend its completion, as well as the high rewards to be given those who have in any way contributed their aid for its advancement, we see the propriety of the declaration—"Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee!"

3. The past gave warrant to this utterance of Moses concerning Israel.

Strong were the chains that bound them, but they were burst asunder. Heavy was the hand that held them; but a hand more potent was raised for their rescue. "*Who is the Lord that I should obey him?*" blasphemously demanded the king. And God answered the tyrant, most and last of all, by slaying his first-born. Israel departs; and the hardened Pharaoh, with his serried hosts, pursues. The multitude which Moses leads is encamped at Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon. The hosts of Pharaoh give evidence of their approach by the gleaming of their spears through clouds of dust raised

by ten thousand chariot-wheels. Above the cry of the terrified people, rises the calm, unfaltering voice of their leader.—“Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you and ye shall hold your peace.”

The hand and the rod are stretched over the sea; and by the commandment of God, the waters, forgetting Nature's law, roll back in fearful heaps, and a highway is formed for the redeemed of the Lord to pass over. Leaving nothing but their enemies and their chains behind, they stand upon the wished-for shore, not slaves, but disenthralled—God's freemen. And as the waters close forever over their cruel foes, stilling their death-cries in its rushing wave, they swell the glad song unto Him who, in their deliverance, had triumphed gloriously!

So in the wilderness were their providences scarcely less astounding. At Marah,

the waters lose their bitterness; in the wilderness of Sin, they hunger, but the morning brings them bread from heaven, and the evening flesh from desert wilds; at Rephidim their thirst gives place to murmuring, but in Horeb the rock is smitten, and its out-gushing streams follow them to the promised land; Ameleck is discomfited by Joshua, while Aaron and Hur support the wearied hands of Moses in the place where for remembrance Jehovah-nissi is raised; the people smitten but repenting are healed by that which was *His* type who, in being lifted from the earth, shall draw all men unto him.

The redeemed of the Lord can testify to providences, marvelous as they have been repeated. They also were in bondage, groveling among the flesh-pots of their carnal desires. Satan, the Prince of the land in which they dwelt, was cruel in their oppression. And were not their lusts harder task-masters than those who withheld the straw? Were they not continually

goaded to unrequited labors? When they were the servants of sin, what profit had they then in the things whereof they are now ashamed?

But deliverance came, and they were brought out of the house of bondage. The bitterest waters have been made sweet. From heaven their supply has come, and they have fed through all their journeying on Angel's food. The Smitten Rock has followed them, foes have been vanquished because of the interceding One, and in him that was lifted from the earth they have found their healing.

"As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth, even for evermore." A thousand have fallen at their side, and ten thousand at their right hand, but destruction has not come nigh them. Because they have set their love upon God, therefore he has delivered them; he has set them on high because they have known His name. They have called upon Him and he has

answered them; he has been with them in trouble, he has saved and honored them. With long life have they been satisfied and He has shown them his salvation. In view of past mercies, with all of truthfulness we may declare—"Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee!"

4. There were reasons in the present for this declaration.

Israel was loved of God, nourished by Him, and with His almighty power protected. And there is a present blessedness attending the household of faith. No better proof of love can be given than that one's life be surrendered for the object loved. But Christ gave himself for the church.

"Her walls before him stand
Dear as the apple of his eye
And graven on his hand."

"The Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." Glory and dominion is ascribed, both in heaven and on

earth, unto him that hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

When in moments of calm reflection, you are led to a right knowledge of yourself, you can but wonder that a creature so unlovely should be loved of God. Forgetting that the Most High takes account of our frailties, you approach His Throne fearful of His upbraidings. If you draw near aright, God appears unto you as of old, saying, yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee!

God's people are sustained by Him. Helpless as you were to save yourself, you are no less impotent in respect to all power for your support. You needed saving grace—without it you could not approach the cross. You need sustaining grace—without it you will never reach the crown. Upon Him who gave you spiritual being you must depend for its continuance.

And then, with reference to them that are His, God is a shield and a strong tower

Amidst all the convulsions which shake the earth, the disturbances which affect mankind, the church of the Redeemer is safe. Built upon an immovable foundation, the storms beat in vain for its overthrow. It has flourished in adversity. It has stood—a far greater wonder—in prosperity. It was safe when men, illiterate and lowly, were its only adherents; safe when kings made it their sanctuary. Amid the pollutions and vices of the present day, opposed by the infidelities and hatred of deluded men, the church need fear no evil; for God is her refuge and strength, her very present help in trouble. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

5. The future opening unto Moses revealed prospective blessedness.

That was a sorrowful farewell given unto the assembled tribes. Devoutly had they prayed that he, their leader, the sharer of their joys and sorrows, their mercies, and their necessities, might be spared to enter

with them the goodly land. Better for them and him, God did not grant their request. Standing, they watch him ascend the heights—now half concealed, now hid, then full in view; till, lost to sight, Moses is alone—no eye upon him, no presence near him but God's.

The people mourn. But God is their stay, and in Joshua they find all that they lose in Moses. There were difficulties before them—the flood must be crossed, the heathen removed before they could enjoy their inheritance. But their efforts, uncompleted were sure of ultimate success. Canaan was theirs and the time had come for them to go up and possess it.

“Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God!”

Favored in times past, surrounded by present good, Thy future with greater blessedness, is to be made glorious!

“Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God.” In obedience to this command, I pray you that are Christ's, to contemplate

the glory which is to be revealed in you. The land of rest is before you, and God purposes to bring you to its enjoyment. You shall triumph over all your foes through Him who is the captain of your salvation. Safely shall you pass over Jordan, for the Ark is gone over before you. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee;" you are fast approaching unto death; soon shall you enter the valley darkened by its shadow. But to you—

"Death is the gate to endless joy,
You need not dread to enter there!"

"Were death denied, poor man would live in vain.
Death wounds to cure; we fall, we rise, we reign;
Spring from our fetters—hasten to the skies,
Where blooming Eden withers from our sight.
This King of Terrors is a prince of peace!"

And O, the beautiful land to which the redeemed are passing! Sometimes its blessed light falls faintly on our souls, bringing a joy beyond all utterance. Far from the haunts of men, with the blue sky above

us, and beauty all around, peace filling the soul and calm enjoyment effacing the remembrance of a world of sin, we ask, *Is not this the heaven we seek?* The answer from the blessed Volume comes—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

The glories and beauties of this lower world have a voice; yet they but *faintly* speak of the glories of the world above. To the poor, it is a world where they shall be rich; for the rich it is an inheritance of greater, and enduring wealth; to the sick a life in which there is

"No weary wasting of the frame away ;"

to the wearied, a place of rest; to the mourning a home where there is no sorrow, neither crying, but where all tears shall be wiped away; to those who sit in darkness it is a land where their sun shall no more go down, nor the moon withdraw itself, but where God shall be their everlasting light,

and the days of their mourning shall be ended.

“Let us depart,
If home like this await the weary soul :
Look up, thou stricken one ; thy wounded heart
Shall bleed no more at Sorrow’s stern control !

“With Faith our guide,
White-robed and innocent to trace the way,
Why fear to plunge in Jordan’s rolling tide
And find the ocean of eternal day ?”

1. In view of these truths, how great carefulness should there be on the part of God’s people. “Wherefore,” says the Apostle, after dwelling on the same theme, “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” God has, of his grace, given unto you light that others do not possess. Walk, therefore, as children of light. While you are God’s witnesses you are also his workmen. By unremitting activity as well as by a well-ordered deportment, you are to draw others to the way you have made your choice.

God has called you to a work in which everyone has his allotted part. You cannot by any means, leave for another the duty you should perform, however insignificant that duty may appear. You are in possession of powers, not your own, to be employed for high and noble purposes. By reason of what God in time past has done for you, in view of what he now does, and, most of all in consideration of what you expect to receive from him—what manner of person ought you to be, in all holy conversation and godliness? Let not the church be the worse but much the better for your having a place in it.

2. There are many, looking over the past, sorry that they have not lived a better life. Deeply do they regret allowing the world so to influence them as that their faithfulness has been hindered. They are no more what they should be than they are what they wish to be. Sensible of Jesus' presence, they would cast themselves at his feet, confessing their demerit and imploring his pardon and help.

But beloved, you are now in Christ's presence for he is moving your heart to this repentance. Nor does he condemn you. Without mentioning your sins, he freely forgives all that is amiss and receives you to his favor. With eternity before you and God's all-piercing but loving eye upon you, consecrate yourself to his service and be resolved to walk before him with a perfect heart.

3. There should be unbounded trust in God. If at any time your deliverance fail, the cause of failure rests with you. God is ever mindful of his covenant, and while you strive to serve him there shall no good thing be withheld from you.

And this trust should supercede all fear. It must be remembered that, to the christian, the hour of greatest darkness is not the period of greatest danger. The hiding of God's face is not the withholding of his presence. There are times when Night leaves her mantle as a covering for the day and earth seems weeping in her sadness. Then, could we but take the eagle's flight and, ris-

ing, pierce the dark and dismal clouds, their upper surface would be seen all glorious with light sent forth from the sun through fields of purest azure. So Faith, rising from earth, finds God always present when unseen below. Build upon God and on his Word and you build secure. And though your circumstances may change, your prospects change, unless you also change, God is the strength of your heart and your portion forever.

4. There is no limit to the invitations of God's Word. All may become Israelites; not by the circumcision of the flesh, but of the heart.

Have you, dear reader, a desire to be of those upon whom God's blessings rest?—of those who, now in the wilderness, shall soon enter the land of promise? Do you choose, by surrendering all that is against it to be a christian?

Then you may be what you desire. Receive the assurance of God's love and mercy. Lift your heart to him and say—With thy help, I covenant my life to thee! I would

be thine now, and thine eternally! Give or withhold the things of this life, but let thy service be my work, let Jesus be my all and heaven my everlasting home!

II.

Fear not, little flock;

for

It is your Father's good pleasure

to give you

The Kingdom.

LUKE 12, 32.

II.

THE GIFT OF THE FATHER.

NOTHING is more common than for the mind to entertain misconceptions of God. All, some time in life, and some in every period of life, regard him in his sterner attributes, ignorant that these are directed by infinite compassion and mercy. They always contemplate him as God—a being to be feared; never as Father—one to be revered and devoutly loved. Wickedly measuring God by themselves, they conceive of him as seated upon his throne, looking down upon the disobedient with the same feelings they themselves entertain towards those by whom they may have been injured. They have not yet learned that his thoughts are not their thoughts, nor his ways their ways. He is looked upon as possessed of all good—having all power, but regarded as jealous of his favors and tardy in their bestowal. “He

gives ; but he gives sparingly and, as it were, of necessity !”

Such views of God are as false as they are criminal. He is not a God afar off, wrapped up in his greatness, but a Father *with us*, caring for our cares, sympathizing in our sorrows, watching over our weakness ; and none but those who have experienced his mercy are aware how freely he bestows. Happy as his creatures may be in receiving blessings at his hand, their happiness or willingness to receive can never equal his pleasure in bestowing. He makes his creatures need a claim upon His bounty, and the greater the want or the more precious the thing desired, the greater is his glory to impart. The highest possible good is here held up to your view, and with it the assurance that it is his good pleasure to give even this unto you.

Let us contemplate *this gift of the Father, the four considerations presented why there should be no fear, and then, the dispositions*

that should exist in us, consequent upon the truth of the declaration.

The kingdom here spoken of is elsewhere called the Kingdom of God. In its broadest meaning, it signifies that state into which the repenting are introduced upon faith in Jesus Christ—a state begun here, having its perfection in eternity. Such as receive this kingdom receive also the adoption of sons, and they await the coming of the King, their elder brother, that they then may be made partakers of his glory. Hence in the Gospel by St. Matthew, after the warning against an inordinate carefulness of temporal things, the exhortation is made to seek first the Kingdom of God, and the assurance is then given that all needed good shall be added thereunto.

Heaven, by many, is supposed to be a place to which death brings us, and only that. The error of this view is apparent. From the teachings of our Lord as well as from the experience of his servants, we know that, heaven, besides being a glorious home

reserved for the faithful, is also a state to be entered upon and enjoyed now. For example: when questioned by the Pharisees with reference to the coming of the Kingdom of God, our Saviour answered: "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo, here! or lo, there! for behold, *the Kingdom of God is within you*," or rather with the marginal reading, "*is among you*." It was a Kingdom present but unobserved by them, for they were strangers to its power and its blessedness. Again, Paul, in addressing his Epistle to the Colossians, declares that he had not ceased to offer prayer, that those unto whom he wrote might be filled with a knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that they "might walk worthy of the Lord in all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the

Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath"—already—"translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son."

Fear not, then, ye who seek with humbleness of mind and a contrite heart, the joys of a present salvation; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you that kingdom which "is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

But the Kingdom of God which has place even in the midst of confusion and sin, shall receive perfection when order is again restored, and the earth purified from her defilements. Christ, the Lord, shall again descend from the habitation of the glorified and restore all things unto himself; even as God has spokem by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

1. This kingdom is one of *great antiquity*.

Before the mountains were brought forth or ever the earth was formed and taught her path-way round the sun—ere yet the sun

himself, as a strong man, had begun his race; when the morning stars were first created, and the silence of eternity first broken by angelic praise, from this time dates the Kingdom of our Lord.

Antiquity is often the boast of nations. Records covered with the dust of ages are exultingly produced, containing the narrative of their early origin,—Fable taking up the story where truth had lost it. But where reason has the place of hollow boasting, and the kingdoms of this world are measured by that which is before as well as above all, the conviction finds easy entrance.—“For we are but of yesterday and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow.” As the tall oak lifts its proud head above the spires of grass beneath its spreading shade, so in respect to early establishment is the Kingdom of our Lord to the kingdoms of the world. “Thy throne is established of old; thou art from everlasting.”

2. This kingdom is also one of *unalterable stability*.

The kingdoms of the earth rise, and the rapidity with which they reach their greatness bespeaks their early downfall. Unlike those stars which shine with a mild and enduring radiance, they resemble the short-lived and brilliant meteor, whose eclipsing course soon ends in darkness. Men, profiting as they imagine by the follies of their predecessors, establish for themselves a kingdom upon different bases—a foundation proved by following generations to be equally false. One kingdom is erected upon the ruins of another only that in its turn may be furnished the foundation for one succeeding. And as the heavenly Kingdom has precedence in point of commencement, so in continuance is it incomparable. It is as stable as ancient, as lasting as stable. In its construction are no elements which engender disruption and overthrow. Its constitution, true as the Almighty One, is written on the pillars of eternity. God was King ages past; yes, before ages were. He is King to-day. And when time shall be no more, his enemies sub-

dued, then shall He be King, Lord over all, blessed forevermore! Satan once attempted the overthrow of this kingdom, but the attempt resulted in his own confusion, and in confirmation of the glorious truth that this is "a kingdom which cannot be moved."

3. It is a kingdom, moreover, *of immeasurable wealth.*

The storehouses of the earth are filled with treasure, and these are explored to make great the nations and give magnificence to the dwelling places of the princes thereof. But the riches of the earth are worthless, and its splendors dim in comparison with those above. There is in the Revelation a description of the Capital of this Kingdom, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God and her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal—with her twelve gates, each gate a pearl, and the walls enclosing the city of pure gold, like unto clear glass—a city without a temple for the Lord, God, Almighty

and the Lamb are the temple of it—a city that has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God does lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof! Though this language is highly figurative, it but faintly portrays the glories of the world of light. Let imagination take her loftiest flight, aided by descriptions most glowing, and it is yet to be remembered that the things which God has prepared for them that love him, both for this world and the world to come, have not entered into the heart of man.

4. It is further to be observed, that this is a kingdom *whose sovereign, though possessed of absolute power, exerts that power only for the happiness of his creatures.*

Absolute monarchies among men are, nearly always, absolute despotisms. Happiness or well-being in the subject is not regarded, excepting in so far as the pleasure of royalty is thereby increased. The pleasure of the monarch is the thing aimed at—

there is often a total disregard of the means employed for its attainment.

The King of Kings doeth according to his pleasure in heaven and on the earth. There is none that can question his authority. But his pleasure never brings pain to a subject his happiness, sorrow. Though unto him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess his sovereignty, still "in his presence is fulness of joy; at his right hand there are pleasures forevermore."

5. This kingdom is *characterized by holiness*.

Too often are we puffed up with the idea of a christianized nationality, thanking God that we are not as other men are—"we do not bow down to stocks and stones!" Idle boast! Thousands amongst us have their gods many and their lords many, and other thousands worship they know not what. Besides our idolatries, there are a thousand other corruptions pervading the masses, in the higher walks of life—among the governed, on the throne. Setting aside empty profes-

sion, where will you find the nation whose God is the Lord? Where the people so filled with his fear that all their transactions are done in equity and truth?

But how shall we speak or conceive of the purity of the kingdom of our God—the Holy City, whose inhabitants not only have *holiness to the Lord* upon their foreheads but in their hearts! Could heaven be opened unto us now, we should fall as dead before its glory; and its glory is the brightness of its holiness. As the dwelling-place takes character from the inhabitant, so heaven, the dwelling-place of God, is like unto himself—**GLORIOUS IN HOLINESS!** And then,

6. This kingdom is *the home of the faithful, and the eternal resting-place of the weary.*

It is the destination of all those who have the fore-shadowings of the perfected kingdom already in their hearts. They having served Christ by ministering unto his children, feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, comfort to the sick and welcome to the stranger, shall stand

in the company unto whom it shall be said, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!"

This then is THE GIFT OF THE FATHER. It was sought, found and is to-day enjoyed by all those who are to be had in everlasting remembrance—those who confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims but who are strangers and pilgrims no more, having found that which they sought—a better country, that is, a heavenly. And it is your Father's good pleasure that this kingdom shall be yours. If you are his, it is prepared for you. And, viewing it as the joy set before you, however rough the way, you may patiently run the christian race. If you now enjoy the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, no matter how dark your prospects for this life may be, you can look above and

—"read your title clear,
To mansions in the skies."

And you can say—

“Yonder’s my rest, my portion fair,
My treasure and my heart are there,
And my abiding home.

For me my elder brethren stay,
And angels becken me away,
And Jesus bids me come!”

There are at least four considerations why, in the hearts of God’s children, there should be no fear. And the first is—

1. “It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the *Kingdom*.”

With many this consideration would have but little weight. Blessed with an abundance of this world’s goods, they know but little of the stern realities of life. But there is a ray of light here for the darkness which surrounds the destitute. Take an illustration.

“I do not know what I shall do,” says one, “times are so hard, and work is hardly to be got. I have scarcely enough to buy a barrel of flour or a ton of coal for my family, or a few necessaries for my sick wife. I am told ‘not to be taking thought for the mor-

row,' but to 'let the morrow take thought for the things of itself.' I would like to know how I can help taking thought!"

And the poor man goes home; and at night, when all is still, he sits at the bed-side of the suffering one and reads—"It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the *Kingdom*." He reads it again—"It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the *Kingdom*." The cloud moves from his face and as he looks upon the pallid countenance of the sufferer before him, he sees there a light which also makes radiant his own. "What could God give us more than that? And if it is his good pleasure to give us the *Kingdom*, I know, if we ask him, he will give us what we now need—health and food and all things else!" And as a tear steals down his care-worn face, he thanks his God for his Bible, and feels that in this one short sentence there is more of comfort than is to be found in a cold unfeeling world.

It is true that God can bestow no greater gift than this, because it includes all other

blessings—always excepting the One through whom we receive the Kingdom. But not withholding these his greatest gifts, shall he not with them freely give us all things? What is there, dear reader, you need to-day? Do you need light that you may better see the path of duty, or grace to enable you to walk in that path? Do you feel a real need of more earthly comforts? Has disease fastened upon you, and do you sigh for a return of health? Ask, and all these shall be given you—if they will serve the better to bring you to the kingdom! You do not wish them, if they would not. If it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, then you may rejoice though you suffer the loss of all things; for he will use your adversity as well as your prosperity—your destitution as well as your abundance to bring you to the place where you have a better and an enduring substance! The second consideration is—

2. "It is your Father's good pleasure to *give* you the kingdom."

The doctrine of free grace is the hardest

we have to learn. It takes many a bitter lesson to teach us that the garments in which, all our life long, we have been clothed and in which we have gloried, are but filthy rags. It is not until the spirit has performed his wondrous work upon the heart that we abhor ourselves. Then we see that we deserve eternal banishment from the presence of God. Satan does not interfere until one is brought to true self-knowledge; then he says "It is all very well for *good* people to expect to get to heaven—it is the height of presumption for you to look for any such thing!" Then he hints at the many years passed in his service, the imperfections which have filled the life since his service has been left, and he asks, "Do you think that *you* deserve to be rewarded with eternal life? Why," he adds, "many have done and suffered twice as much as you have, and yet have been cast away. You might as well cease your efforts and enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season!"

To all this the Christian can reply: "It is

true that I have sinned and come short of the glory of God. I know I do not deserve the least of God's mercies; much less do I deserve this, the greatest. But God will not reward me according to my deserts. It is not his design that I should pay for what I receive; he knows I cannot. It is his good pleasure to *give* me the kingdom!" The third consideration is—

3. "It is your Father's *good pleasure* to give you the kingdom."

There are few hindrances in the way of sin. Perhaps the only opponent is conscience, and even conscience becomes feebler as habits of sin strengthen. The path is downward that leads from duty, from happiness and God. And whatever can make its course both easy and rapid is abundantly furnished. Let Nature have her way and she will work a speedy ruin for the one she guides. On the other hand the way to heaven is in more respects than one an ascending way, and all the powers of the soul, aided by powers divine, are called forth in its prose-

cution. To float with the tide is an easy thing. Strong effort is called for if we would stem it. Let a man resolve in his heart to forsake sin and a host is arrayed against him. Let him attempt to carry out that purpose in his life, and he must contend with principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places! And so his experience proves that heaven cannot be reached by indolently reclining

“On flowery beds of ease—”

that stubborn nature can only be subdued and the heart sanctified by painful crucifixion and continued warfare!

But fightings bring fears. Viewing the work before him—the enemies to be vanquished, and for the time losing sight of the One in whose might all is to be accomplished, the Christian is overwhelmed with dark forebodings and is almost ready to believe what Satan suggests—after all his

efforts will be unavailing and he will fall short of the prize.

This third consideration is a barrier to prevent the in-coming of such fear, or a resort, when it has forced an entrance. It is a support upon which the soul, in the darkest hour may rest. Let discouragements increase; let Satan, with supreme malignity, summon all his legions to the onset that with one grand overthrow your destruction may be secured, yet you need not fear nor give way to despair, since it is your Father's *good pleasure* to give you the kingdom!

When God resolves, who can withstand his purpose? God resolved that Israel should come up out of Egypt to the possession of the promised land. Pharoah was strong and Satan in him was much stronger; and these two set themselves against the Almighty, and who prevailed? Ask; and you shall see a land made desolate with plagues! Ask; and a loud cry will enter your ear for the slain first-born! Ask; and over the flood

will come the strains of a swelling song—
“Sing unto the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. In the greatness of thine excellency thou has overthrown them that rose up against thee; thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders!”

And is not God equally able to accomplish his purposes concerning you? He has already brought you up out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage. So shall he safely lead you through the wilderness, even to the promised Canaan, *for it is his purpose to do so!* And, then, the fourth consideration which, if all others fail, should serve to take away fear, is this—

4. “*Fear not*, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”—that is, “*It is God’s command that you should not fear.*”

Now it is always the safest and best to

obey God upon his bare command whether, as in this instance, he gives the reason for the command or not. To hesitate is to distrust, and to distrust is to dishonor God. "Them that honor me"—and to honor is to have faith in me—"I will honor, but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." When God commands there is no occasion to fear. Under the protection of One who has all power in heaven and on earth; yes, and power over hell—with the guidance of One who knows the end from the beginning, and who never has had nor can have a mistake in the design, or a failure in the execution of a plan, why should you fear?

Let the winds blow with all their fury, and the mad waves toss the huge ship as a thing of naught—let day-light flee, no light be seen save that which sparkles from the foaming wave through which the ship must pass as through a sea of fire. The men fear not; for, with confidence in his heart and strength in his hand, the captain's at the wheel! Does the infant fear when nestled in

its mother's bosom? When thunders shake the sky and lightnings turn the night to mid-day, does the little group at home fear, if father's only with them? Neither should you fear when God directs—when on his bosom you may repose your head—when, meeting with God's children, you have Him in your midst! Fear not: for this is God's command!

There are certain dispositions which should have place in us consequent upon the truths we have considered.

1. And it is first to be remarked, since it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, it should be your good pleasure to receive it.

After dwelling upon the excellencies of this exalted gift, one might suppose there would be no trouble here. But when we take into account the barriers which sin throws up to prevent its coming—when we remember its rejection by thousands unto whom it has been offered, the exhortation to receive it is seen to be a necessary one.

Two kingdoms cannot occupy the same place at the same time. Said the Saviour, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." The King of glory or the Prince of darkness must be your lord—one, not both. But where Satan has the supremacy, and he has it in every unregenerate heart, his power is not so easily broken. It is by violence that he is removed and a better authority established.

Let sin no longer have dominion over you. Having put on Christ, strive to walk in Him. Be willing that the Lord Jesus should enter your heart and reign without a rival there. At any sacrifice, choose to receive the kingdom of God in all its present fulness, waiting patiently its perfection in eternity. Implore the Spirit's aid that you may offer daily this petition with all its meaning—*"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done," in me, "as it is in heaven!"*

2. There should be a fitness for heaven.

To secure this your utmost diligence should be employed.

The wicked are often heard to say, "I ex-

pect to go to heaven when I die. I hope God, in a dying hour, will have mercy upon my soul and bring me to himself!" Vain hope! A man with all his sins about him fit for heaven? So then is the beggar, unwashed, unclothed, except in rags, a fit tenant for a palace, a fit companion for a King. There is no heaven for the unholy. Go where he will there still is torment. For in his bosom is a flame which nought can quench save Jesus' flowing blood. The sinner, even after that he is justified by faith, needs the Spirit's sanctifying power before he is fitted for the place where the pure alone can dwell.

Yield yourself, therefore, to God's gracious working. Seek, by all means, the same end He also seeks—even your sanctification. Murmur not at the circumstances through which you are made to pass; for by the things which cause you sorrow, more than by those which bring you joy, is God perfecting the work within. When perfected, you will sleep. Fear not; Christ will speak, and you will rise—satisfied with his likeness!

3. There should be a readiness to depart.

The Son of man, like one who has taken a journey into a far country without naming a time for his return, may come when he is least expected. "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching."

Dear reader; it may perhaps be that you are very near the grave. If so, and Christ be formed within your soul, then you are, even now, though unconsciously, entering the haven of eternal rest. Rough though the voyage has been, it is now almost at an end. Lift up the eye of faith and tell me, see you not the New Jerusalem, the pearly gates, the jasper walls, the golden streets? Breaks not the light which fills the land of glory on your view? Happy soul! Soon shall thy anchor drop; we shall see thee, shall hear thy voice no more! But in heaven a new voice shall be heard, and another harp lend its strains to the heavenly harmony!

Young Christian, be thou also ready! Eternity's morn breaks upon some before

their noon of life is past. With all earnestness and affection, let the question be proposed—Art thou ready, waiting, watching, expecting?

With the joys of heaven before us and the assurance that Christ can save to the uttermost all who come to God through him, how sad the thought that so many are without hope in the Redeemer—so many that have not been folded by the Good Shepherd. Not to quiet their fears was this comforting scripture given. Indeed, since God's goodness has failed to bring them to repentance, there is everything to fear. For God has declared that those who find all their happiness in earthly things shall be driven away in their wickedness, and then, though they cry unto Him for the least of his mercies, unto each of them He will declare—"Thou, in thy life-time, hadst thy good things, likewise my servants evil things; now they are comforted, but thou art tormented!"

To every one who has hitherto neglected life's great work, we would say, having au-

thority from on high, *give God your heart*,
and, numbered with his elect upon earth,
you shall join them as they enter in through
the gates into the city!

Away with our sorrow and fear,
We soon shall recover our home ;
The city of saints shall appear,
The day of eternity come :
From earth we shall quickly remove,
And mount to our native abode,
The house of our Father above,
The palace of angels and God.

Our mourning is all at an end,
When, raised by the life-giving word,
We see the new city descend,
Adorned as a bride for her Lord :
The city so holy and clean,
No sorrow can breathe in the air ;
No gloom of affliction or sin,
No shadow of evil is there !

By faith we already behold
That lovely Jerusalem here ;
Her walls are of jasper and gold,
As crystal her buildings are clear :
Immovably founded in grace,
She stands, as she ever has stood ;

And brightly her builder displays,
And flames with the glory of God.

No need of the sun in that day,
Which never is followed by night,
Where Jesus's beauties display
A pure and a permanent light ;
The Lamb is their light and their sun,
And lo ! by reflection they shine ;
With Jesus ineffably one,
And bright in effulgence divine.

The saints in his presence receive
Their great and eternal reward,
In Jesus, in heaven they live ;
They reign in the smile of their Lord
The flame of angelical love
Is kindled at Jesus's face :
And all the enjoyment above
Consists in the rapturous gaze.

C. WESLEY.

III.

God

Who at Sundry Times and in Divers Manners

Spake in Time Past

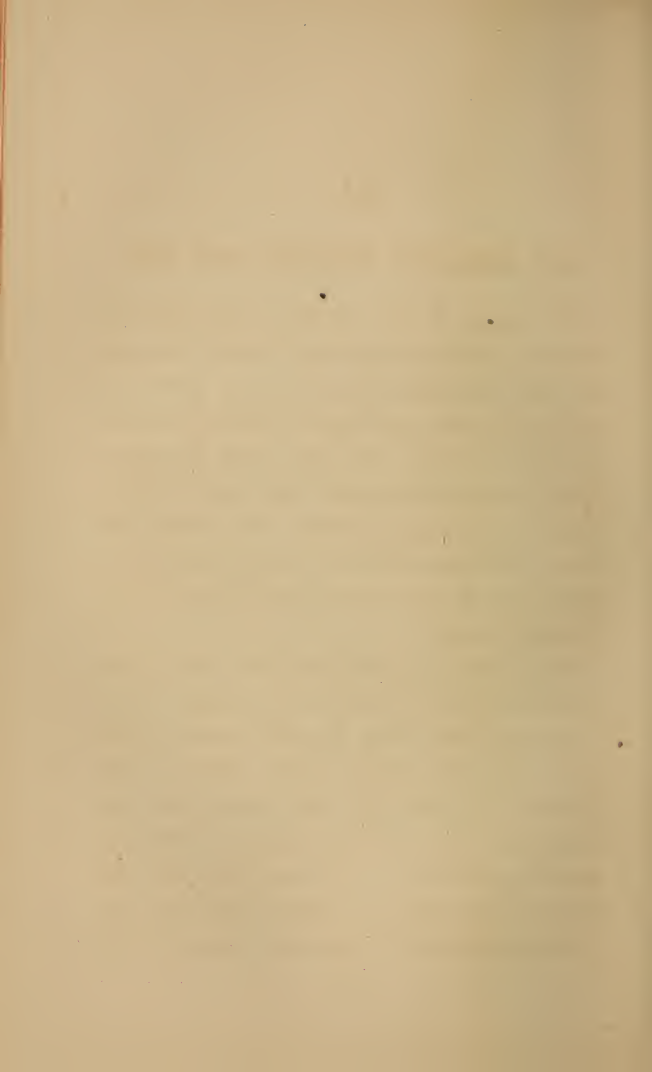
Unto the Fathers by the Prophets,

hath

In these last Days

Spoken unto us by His

Son.



III.

GOD SPEAKING THROUGH HIS SON.

The more of the world we see and the better we become acquainted with men, and are able in things pertaining unto them, to distinguish the real from the false—the more we discover of the pain and heart heaviness faintly concealed beneath the mask of cheerfulness and contentedness, the deeper the conviction sinks within—"Surely, every man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain."

It is a wise appointment that our course in life is often shrouded in obscurity. It is a necessity that there be much sorrow mingled with our portion here. This is the ballast by which, upon the waters, we are steadied; without it, our overthrow is sure. It forms a barrier to our reveling amid the pleasures of sense; it proves destructive to our forgetfulness of God or to a disregard of

our eternal home. We will not therefore murmur because we taste its bitterness. Without being insensible to its pains, we will yet joyfully receive it as a means of our eternal blessedness.

But how dark and inexplicable would be our life, were there no revelation from God. This world with all its disturbances is a paradise to what it then would be. For there would still be sorrow, but no intermingling of comfort. We would then have to die, but in death there would be no hope. Flowers might bloom, the fields be clothed with richer magnificence, the waters mirror back more beautifully the purity of heaven the forest trees whisper to the winds their joy and there would be no glad emotions nor respondings of joyfulness in us.

And not only is our happiness involved in a revelation from Him that created us, the necessity of a revelation arises from the very object of our being. We are made for service, as well as for enjoyment. It is not true to say we are made to be happy. We

are made to serve ; and rewards of happiness are attendant upon this service. But, before we can obey God, there is needed a rule for our obedience, a law for the direction of those powers which God has bestowed ; and this law must be revealed.

The revelation is made. God has written his law on all created things and given man an inward perception of it. It is written in shining characters above him ; the lesson is repeated in the depths beneath ; and by every sound, from the hoarse rumbling of the ocean surge to the peaceful murmur of expiring day, its teaching is conveyed unto the heart. *God is in everything* and there is spirituality in man which may respond to his movings.

But, to the indirect teaching of created things, God, in love, condescends to add direct manifestations of himself. "At sundry times and in divers manners" He "spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets." Enoch's evidence of acceptance with God was doubtless given unto him by outward

manifestation as well as by inward consciousness. And the knowledge he possessed through which he was enabled to walk with God, was declared unto the world that others also might practice a like obedience. Noah, a preacher of righteousness, was in God's hand a trumpet sounding forth divine wrath upon a sin-cursed race, and giving kindly admonition of the destruction that so speedily was to overtake the rebellious and the polluted. Moses, honored above all men, had direct interviews with God, and from the heights of Sinai he brought the written law. David sang of One yet to come, and tuned his harp to sweeter minstrelsy when he discoursed of things concerning the King. And others, gifted with prophetic vision, while denouncing present iniquity, and giving direction as to the way of holiness, made known also things that should come to pass even to the end of time.

Thus unto the Antediluvian and unto the Postdiluvian world, when men were few in number, and when, for number, they were as

the stars in the sky—in the fulness of the mid-day glory, in the cool of evening, at the noon of night—in the silent chambers of the soul, from the burning bush, the Holiest of Holies, the mount shrouded in terrors, from the fire and from the cloud—in the trembling accents of the aged seer, and in the gentle lisplings of the awakened child—in all these sundry times and divers manners hath God spoken unto the fathers by the prophets. But in these last days, HE HATH SPOKEN UNTO US BY HIS SON! Let us attend to a few particulars.

1. God, in Christ, has given unto us a confirmation of his truth, both as delivered by himself and by the mouth of his prophets.

That man in his expulsion from the presence of the Lord might not despair, promise was given him of One—the woman's seed and his—who would be the conqueror of his destroyer. Driven from a blissful home to become a wretched wanderer upon the earth, he had his heaviness, in part, removed by promise of One through whom mercy

might be found and restoration to a higher bliss secured. It is but natural to suppose that the recipient of so glorious a pledge, through gratitude of heart, would forever, thereafter, seek after God and look with joyful expectancy for the coming of the promised Deliverer. Not so! Generation succeeded generation, and the mournful truth was declared concerning them all—"The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." And God, by his prophets, renewed his promises of grace, and to induce men from walking in the way their evil imaginations had devised, pointed to Him who would be a ruler to his people Israel. But, did the renewal of God's covenant bring to pass the designed end? Was the whole church visible thereby moved to a renunciation of their idolatries, and a future and entire consecration to God? Did men love God because He so loved the world? No! The evil sentence was again and again pronounced. What could not be secured by acts of love, and promises of clemency, was attempted by fierce judgments of pestilence,

famine, the sword, and painful captivities. Yet was the heart of God grieved and the eyes of his servants made to run with tears because of the stubbornness, the rebellion of the people and the consequent desolations which were come upon Zion.

Now, would it not have been just in God and only what the multiplied transgressions of mankind deserved to have repented Him of his gracious designs, and to have withheld his promised Son? It would have been just: but the promise, resting not on the merits of the creature, but on eternal truth, though the whole universe of created things should pass away, could not fail of fulfilment. "God is not man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent; hath He said, and shall he not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall he not make it good?" What God has promised, whether of good to the upright or of evil to the wicked, he will not fail to perform.

"Happy the man whose hopes rely
On Israel's God; He made the sky,

And earth, and seas with all their train;
 His truth forever stands secure;
 He saves the oppressed, he feeds the poor,
 And none shall find his promise vain."

Jesus Christ, then, by his coming, while he fulfilled the prophecies, spake unto us concerning the immutability of God's word.

2. God has spoken unto us in these last days as to the life he would have us live.

The perfection of God's law was illustrated in the life of Christ—its adaptedness to raise man, made a little lower than the angels, to an equality with them in all loveliness and acceptability to God. The law was plain, but it needed exemplification. Christ came, not to destroy the law by lowering its requirements to suit man's degraded powers, but that he, by his life, might raise humanity to a juster apprehension of it. He came, a Saviour, to restore our souls. He was a Shepherd that he might lead us in the paths of righteousness.

In the purity of Christ's spirit, the piety of his heart and the benevolence of his out-

ward life, we have that which should call forth our highest energies. To which of the saints will you turn for an example so perfect as that of Christ? Do you point to Abraham? Then you are reminded of his distrustfulness of God through which he was led to the grossest falsehood. Would you refer to Moses? But sin, in that he spake unadvisedly with his lips, kept him from entering the promised land. Do you name Israel's sweet Singer and ask, Was not he a man after God's heart? He was, so far as the government of Israel is concerned; but there is the iniquity from which he prayed to be purged, and the blood-guiltiness from which he cried for deliverance. You say, "There is Saint Paul." Yes, a man in every way to be imitated, but not in his persecution of the saints! Thus you might enumerate the saintly throng whose lives, with any degree of minuteness, are related, and who either adorn the sacred page or give glory to the church in later days, and of none can it be said but of Christ, "*He was in all*

points tempted like as we are, yet WITHOUT SIN !"

Would you be made meek and lowly in heart?— Go take the yoke of Christ upon you! Would you be loving? Draw near to him who took the little children in his arms, put his hands upon them and blessed them! Would you be charitable? See him feed the thousands by his miraculous power, moved by a solicitude that would not let them depart fainting to their homes! Would you be sympathizing? Go with Jesus to the grave of Lazarus and drop with him a tear! Would you be submissive, and, in all things delight in the pleasure of your God? Imitate Him who came, not to do his own will, but the will of the Father by whom he was sent! Would you be possessed of all that can exalt you upon earth, of all that can fit you for heaven? Then go, not unto Abraham, nor unto Moses, nor unto David, nor unto Saint Paul; neither to the Saints that bless the earth, nor to those who are themselves blessed in heaven; but, weeping over

your unworthiness, go sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of him!

O, that men were more Christ-like! O, that Christians did more resemble Him whose name they bear—Him whom they profess to serve! Then would the hungry be fed, the naked clothed, the sick visited, the destitute and the out-cast nourished. Then would there be no more pain caused by the slanderer's venomous tongue, and all cruel and uncharitable bickering would cease. Instead of wealth spent in the punishment of crime, means would be employed for its prevention. Men, now degraded and sinking still lower from a sense of their degradation, would be taught and encouraged in a life of virtue. Then would the Church arise in the majesty of her strength and the excellence of her glory, her borders would be enlarged until all the nations of the earth were safe within her fold. Then would the earth, speedily released from suffering and from sin, hush her cry of anguish and join the morning-stars in the song sung at her birth!

Comparing your life with that of Christ, is there not cause for shame, for tears, for self-condemnation? In respect to your commerce with the world, your deportment in your household, the condition of your own heart, happy are you indeed if there is not room for a great, if not an absolute change! In view of past delinquencies in the lives of all, is there no reason why God should speak unto us in these last days by his Son?

3. The teachings of our Lord were declarations of the divine will and word.

Nearly fifteen hundred years had passed since Jehovah, proclaiming himself the only God, had given direction respecting every relation in life, making it obligatory for every one to love the Lord with all his heart and his neighbor as himself. But the commandments of God, plain when given, were made obscure by those whose hearts they failed to control. The traditions of men had so long been taught for the word of God, that, with a very small exception, the world was shrouded in gross darkness when its

true Light came. It was a necessity that God should arise for the maintenance of his cause, for as the sceptre was about to depart from Judah, so was truth ready to leave the earth.

And the time had come for the introduction of a new dispensation. The wall of separation between the Hebrew and the surrounding nations was to be removed; immense accessions were to be made to the church of God from the Gentile world, and the prophetic inquiry was to receive answer in the fulfilment of Jehovah's design—"Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" A special communication from heaven was, therefore, required that the divine purpose, already foretold, might more clearly be made known in glad tidings to all people. And who so fitted to bear the message to the world as He who must die to save it? Reference is had to this part of his office when he is represented as saying—"I have preached righteousness in the great congregation:

lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy loving kindness and thy truth from the great congregation.”

And how wonderful appeared the teachings of the Saviour to the vast multitudes gathered to hear him! They had been instructed to regard malice and revenge consistent with piety—that friends might be loved but foes hated—that they might exact an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth—that religion was in ceremonies and that he was most religious whose prayers were longest and whose charities accompanied by the greatest ostentation. But Jesus taught the principles of universal benevolence, kindness to the unthankful as well as to the good—that true religion is of the heart and not at all in performances and parade, which only foster pride and give strength to inward corruption—that charity is acceptable to God when it is prompted by love, free from

the desire to be seen of men—that not the great, the wise, the mighty of earth are chosen, but that the poor in spirit, the mournful, the meek, those hungering and thirsting for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peace-makers, the persecuted for truth's sake are accepted and beloved of God, the foundation of whose joy is, *their reward is great in heaven!*

And what ineffable sweetness, compassionate tenderness and divine majesty accompanied his word! No wonder that the people, accustomed to the arrogance, cruelty and self-seeking of the Scribes and Pharisees were astonished at his doctrine. No wonder that the very men sent for his arrest, disarmed and astounded returned to tell their masters, “Never man spake like this man!”

And, dear reader, have not the Saviour's words fallen on our own hearts full of preciousness and power? Wearied and heavy-laden, has not his invitation, “Come unto me!” brought rest and refreshing to the soul? Burdened with a consciousness of

guilt and feeling ourselves worthy of death, how has the load been removed when he said, "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more!" Looking no farther than to our own hearts and remembering all that is past, are we not ready to repeat the words, "*Never man spake like this man!*"

4. God speaks unto us through the sufferings and death of his Son.

God's love cannot be exercised at the expense of his justice nor can his love reach a point where his justice fails, for both attributes are infinite. God's love pleaded for the salvation of the sinner, but Justice could not remit one of her many claims against him. The integrity of Justice is shown in her great demands—the strength of Love in her willingness to comply with them. The great plan, according to which the whole system of created things must move is encroached upon and the transgressor or his substitute must suffer. Christ is the sinner's substitute and through his sufferings and his death God spake unto us of that

justice that could not spare so great a sacrifice, and of the love that could not withhold so unspeakable a gift.

The odiousness of sin is hereby discovered. Sin must be punished, though the bitterness of punishment be tasted by him upon whose shoulders it is laid—the Holy and the Just—the Beloved of the Father. The cup must not pass from those sinless lips until the worm-wood and the gall had entered his soul. For our transgressions he was wounded: for our healing he was smitten. Only for the night of suffering and of prayer, the day that wrapped mount Calvary in darkness, the cry of the forsaken One, we never could so well have known the hateful character of sin!

God speaks through the sufferings of Christ to those who, following his steps, are made partakers of his sorrows. "The disciple is not above his Master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his Master." Or, rather, every one shall be perfected as his

Master,* that is through suffering. "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." Christ was made a perfect leader to his people through his sufferings and his death. As the Levitical priest was consecrated by the blood of the slain victim, so the Saviour by his own blood was consecrated and made a perfect priest for the offering of the world's sacrifice.

They that are Christ's, must, in respect to suffering, be made conformable to his image. There is much pain attending the removal of the carnal mind. Deadness to the world, which, in some degree characterizes every Christian heart, implies the pain of dying. There can be no Christianity without daily cross-bearing; and to the cross all that is sensual must be nailed. We are to lose the the life of nature, would we find a higher life in God. "Forasmuch then as Christ

* Margin.

hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." That you may reign with Christ, you are called to suffer with him ; and, with the apostles you may rejoice that you are accounted worthy to suffer for his sake. Seek not, then, a life devoid of pain. Choose that, rather, which, through the abandonment in your heart of all earthly good, shall bring you to fellowship with Christ and impart unto you the evidence of divine sonship.

And as suffering is sweetened by the reflection that to suffer is to participate in the experience of our Lord, so the pains of death are greatly divested of their sharpness since Christ has entered the grave before us. Death and the grave would be terrible in contemplation only for the sting removed and the victory obtained. Now, with the faithful women, we may joyfully accept the angel's call—"Come, see the place where the Lord lay !" Yes ; when heart and flesh shall fail, we may ourselves lie down with an

unfaltering trust in God and resign our spirits into his hands who gave them.

5. God has spoken unto us by the resurrection of his Son.

The work of redemption, in so far as it related to the sufferings of Christ, was completed when the Saviour bowed his head upon the cross. He had promised to come again unto those who were his, that he might receive them unto himself. Though, in respect to intensity of sorrow, they might not drink of the cup he must drink of, nor be baptized with his baptism, yet must they suffer and die. But as, from the grave, he had called forth Lazarus to a renewal of his life on the earth, so would they be taken to an eternal life in heaven. And this was the pledge of his coming—the temple would be destroyed and in three days raised again. He would inhabit the tomb and on the third day, by his own power, break its bars and come forth Conqueror over death and the grave; and his resurrection was the pledge of theirs.

Thus according to the prophecies relating to him as well as to his own teachings did Christ rise from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept. And as in Adam all died so in Christ shall all be made alive. Christ must first rise, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Our fathers, unto whom the prophets spake, have, with the prophets, long since passed away. The friends of our early childhood are gone. Our neighbors, our companions and our children sleep in the church-yard; the winter snows drift where they lie, and when summer comes the flowers and grass make beautiful their resting-place. The tears course down the old man's withered face, as, leaning on his staff, he looks around and finds himself alone, bereft of all that once he knew and loved. Soon shall he join his kindred dead and we in turn will follow him. "Then shall return the dust to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

But when the trumpet shall sound, the

dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory!

Death may take from us our friends, and the grave may claim them; but we need not—

—“tremble to convey
 Their bodies to the tomb;
 There once the flesh of Jesus lay,
 And left a sweet perfume.”

Every particle of the precious dust is watched over by an omnipotent Power, that, in the resurrection-morning shall make every atom instinct with life.

“Corruption, earth and worms,
 Shall but refine their flesh,
 Till their triumphant spirits come
 To put it on afresh.”

Blessed be God, who spake by the prophets unto our fathers, but, unto us, has so comfortingly spoken by his Son!

6. God speaks unto us by Him who now liveth to make intercession for us.

Christ now pleads for those who, sinful but repenting, look unto him for salvation. "We are not to conceive of Christ as an intercessor with his Father in heaven, in such an humble supplicating manner as when here upon earth, with knees bended down, and eyes lifted up to heaven; this is inconsistent with his glorified state. But it is such a pleading and petitioning with his Father as is in the nature of a claim and demand; and it is such a claim and demand made to his Father, as is accompanied with the presenting the memorials of his death unto him."*

The continued intercession of Christ is a proof of God's willingness to accept the sinner for whom the Redeemer pleads, if farther proof is needed than that afforded when God gave his well-beloved to die. With respect to love of the sinful and desire for his sal-

* Burkitt's notes on Heb. 7, 25.

vation, the declaration made unto the Jews may be repeated evermore, "*I and my Father are one!*"

And as this pleading of Christ is a proof of the Father's willingness to accept, so is it a proof of the Son's ability to save. Says the Apostle, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." The vilest, the most degraded, those despaired of by their friends and who have come at last to despair of themselves, may approach with humble confidence unto God and find in him their all. If the prayer of the righteous man availeth much, who shall measure the potency of the pleadings of our High Priest above?

And if those who repent of their sins may be encouraged, because of the intercession of our Lord, to trust in God's mercy, much more may they who have already found redemption in his blood. In life, at the hour of death, in the day of judgment, none can lay anything to the charge of God's elect. For it

is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Let none who love the Lord and give evidence of their love by constantly walking in his way, so far dishonor Him as to yield themselves to fear. For every one who has an Advocate with the Father may be persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

“Firm as his throne his promise stands,
And he can well secure
What I’ve committed to his hands,
Till the decisive hour.”

1. It is to be remarked that God in speaking unto us gives proof of his marvelous condescension. There is none that can claim equality with God. He taketh up the isles as a very little thing, and the nations are as

nothing before him. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts. An attempt to apprehend God only shows the weakness of the finite to grasp the infinite. But though he is high, he has respect unto the lowly. The meanest of his creatures are as surely the objects of his love as the greatest. The worm that crawls the ground or finds its death beneath our foot—the insect that, born to-day, fills its grave to-morrow, has a place in God's thoughts as well as the highest angel that bows before his throne. He takes notice of us—the most tender thoughts he has towards us, and with the deepest solicitude does he regard us. He is preparing heaven for our everlasting habitation, and he would bring us to its enjoyment. Knowing our complete unworthiness thus so graciously to be dealt with, shall we not cultivate a love for the Being who has first and most loved us?

2. God speaks to us through Christ as if

he would teach us that through Christ alone we may have intercourse with heaven. As God speaks to us by his Son, so may we speak to God through his Son. Our prayers never rise to heaven except they be offered in the Redeemer's name. It is by his Son God speaks to us, and through his Son he grants us every good and perfect gift.

3. What solemn attention should be given when God speaks! How carefully should we listen to his voice, and how scrupulously observe what he commands. The words of man may be disregarded and no evil follow, but the direst punishment must come upon those who turn away when God speaks. Let those then who practice sin, turn from the evil of their way before his wrath is poured upon them!

Eternal beam of light divine,
 Fountain of unexhausted love;
 In whom the Father's glories shine,
 Through earth beneath, and heaven above:—

Jesus, the weary wand'rer's rest,
 Give me thy easy yoke to bear;

With steadfast patience arm my breast,
 With spotless love and lowly fear.

Thankful I take the cup from thee,
 Prepared and mingled by thy skill :
 Though bitter to the taste it be,
 Powerful the wounded soul to heal.

Be thou, O Rock of ages, nigh !
 So shall each murmuring thought be gone,
 And grief, and fear, and care shall fly,
 As clouds before the mid-day sun.

Speak to my warring passions,—peace ;
 Say to my trembling heart,—Be still ;
 Thy power my strength and fortress is,
 For all things serve thy sovereign will.

O death ! where is thy sting ? Where now
 Thy boasted victory, O grave ?
 Who shall contend with God ? or who
 Can hurt when God delights to save ?

C. WESLEY.

IV.

Many are

The Afflictions of the Righteous:

But

The Lord Delivereth Him

Out of Them

All.

Ps. 34, 19.



IV.

THE AFFLICTIONS OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

Reason and revelation unite to declare that our life upon earth is a state of discipline—a season of preparation; and a careful survey of all that is about us is sufficient to convince that the existing order of things is eminently fitted to elicit and develop those affections which alone can make possible the enjoyment of that future and noble existence met by the eye of faith.

In the light of this philosophy, the dealings of God towards his people are largely divested of their mystery—much that before was unintelligible is rendered easy of comprehension—that which was obscure is made plain—doubts and fears flee away and the overflowing heart adores the wisdom and goodness that doeth all things well.

The excellence of the place prepared of God for his people has been shown at length

and it was then remarked that there should be a fitness for heaven—that the Christian must be made meet for his inheritance with the saints in light. We will now consider an important means to that end and the manner of its operation.

It may, however, be necessary to state that this fitness for heaven consists in the perfect possession of the divine image lost through sin—that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord—that complete deliverance from sin secured by the energy of the Holy Spirit for those who are born again. A soul fitted for heaven is one having its affections set upon God and his service as the supreme good, giving to its Author that which it has received from Him—all that it has and is. Nothing more than this is required; nothing less is accepted. And he is righteous who, keeping this constantly before him, cheerfully submits to the disciplinary circumstances of life instead of resisting their designed and salutary influence.

Let us look upon the righteous in his

affliction, and then, upon the righteous in his deliverance.

1. The Righteous in his affliction.

Trouble and sorrow are the common heritage of mankind. See man whenever or wherever you please—from the cradle to the grave—from him whose days are spent amid the luxuries and splendors of a palace to the one who, in his humble shed, is scarcely shielded from the winter's blast—from those who endure the eternal frosts of arctic regions to those who pant beneath the almost insupportable heat of the torrid zone, and, as surely as all are conceived in sin, your observation will only go to prove true the saying of Eliphaz the Temanite—"Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward."

The righteous has peculiar afflictions. While, by a virtuous life, he is saved from many sorrows which come unto the wicked, he yet, as God's Word teaches, has afflictions peculiarly his own—afflictions brought unto him from without and afflictions which have their origin in his own heart.

1. The exhortation of the Apostle made unto the suffering Christians of his day is equally in place for those of the present—“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened unto you.” For though violent persecutions are not so common now as in former years, the spirit of persecution is still alive and the same bitter opposition to truth does not fail in new forms to exhibit itself. As long as Satan is in the world, exerting his power over the hearts of men, so long will the followers of Christ have tribulation. To become a Christian is to set yourself against the world, the flesh and the Devil; and you have no reason to think these will be idle enemies. Indeed, the more you endeavor to let your light shine before men, the greater effort will be made to extinguish it. The more earnestly you reach after the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus, the more resolute will be the hosts of hell to draw you from the skies. The higher you soar on wings of

faith and love, the stronger will be their efforts for your destruction, that, in the greatness of your fall they may have the greater triumph. So that, from the time of Moses till the present, it is found that to forego the pleasures of sin is deliberately to choose affliction with the people of God.

And it is not always for their own wrongdoing that Christian men suffer. The violent dealing of the wicked is sometimes allowed in its immediate consequences to fall upon the head of the righteous. The innocent must suffer with and sometimes for the guilty. By turning aside the base solicitations made unto him and in virtue maintaining the integrity of his manhood, Joseph incurred the vengeance of a harlot and was cast into an Egyptian prison. So the faithful among the Hebrew captives were covered with shame because the uncircumcised heathen, entering the sanctuary of the Most High, had defiled it. The disciples were forewarned that, for His sake whom they served, they should be hated of all men.

And the Messiah himself was wounded and slain, not for his own sins, but for the transgressions of those he came to save. Is it not enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord?

2. And then the righteous must have afflictions arising within himself until Christ Jesus, who is made unto him wisdom, righteousness and sanctification, becomes also complete redemption. For "what watchings, and wrestlings, what condemnation and bitterness, what repentings and upbraidings burden the efforts of a soul that strives every day for a closer walk with God!" As a man's worst enemies are those of his own house, so the worst sins, as being most prolific of sorrow, are those of his own heart. And even sins, cancelled, that shall never rise for condemnation, leave, in their memory the bitterness of worm-wood and of gall. It is only when in heaven, delivered from this body of corruption, that the tears which have their cause within shall be wiped from the believer's eye. Indeed, the thought most

filled with comfort is, in that glorious home, while permitted to see the Redeemer's face we shall—

—“never, never sin!”

and so—

—“from the rivers of his grace,
Drink endless pleasures in.”

1. Afflictions are used for correction. When the Lord spake to Manasseh, in consequence of the abominations of that wicked and idolatrous King, his voice was disregarded until the Lord brought upon him the hosts of the Assyrians and he was led captive to Babylon. Then he besought the Lord his God and humbled himself before the God of his fathers. The goodness of God does not always lead men to repentance. The rain falling for the unjust as well as for the just, does not always bring thankfulness to Him who sends the cooling shower. Because of the effect they produce, the blessings of heaven are often made into a curse by those who partake of them. So that it be-

comes a necessity for God, who willeth not the death of the sinner, to employ agencies which prove powerful as they are painful.

And afflictions are not only sent to reclaim the sinner, they also are made to check and admonish the disciple. The warfare against inward corruption is sometimes made the occasion for outward digression; the feet are allowed to stray from the path of duty; sins that appeared so hateful now assume a more pleasing character; the principle of holiness becomes nearly extinct and the heart quite forgetful of God. Then God, in mercy, sends afflictions, the wanderer is aroused and thus saved from eternal death. "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word."

2. Afflictions serve to keep the mind from being absorbed by earthly things. It is natural for the heart to seek its treasure here; for the affections to be set on things of earth, rather than on things above. Severe discipline is necessary for the soul before it can justly estimate the things

which perish with the using and comprehend the things of eternal duration. Take affliction from a follower of Christ, and he ceases to be such, for he then forgets that he is a stranger and pilgrim; and so, instead of looking for a city which hath foundations, is content with the one he now inhabits. As the eagle stirreth up her nest, driving her young from their safe resting-place that she may teach them to soar above the clouds, so the Father of mercies by afflictions arouseth those who are at ease and asleep in the midst of worldly enjoyment that they may—

“ Rise from transitory things
Towards heaven, their native place.”

3. Afflictions are used for the development of important Christian graces.

If now the righteous could see face to face instead of through a glass, darkly—if now he might fully compass that which he only knows in part, where then would be the abiding of faith, hope and love? In a state of perfect happiness below, faith must be greatly enfeebled if not destroyed. It is

only when promise is made of relief from comparative wretchedness that faith has its legitimate and healthy exercise. It is only when corrections are multiplied that Faith points to a Father's hand wielding the rod. It is only when clouds impend that Faith waits for the sun to part their dark folds and let down the golden rays. That faith may be found worthy of praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, it is to be tried with fire and thus proved to be more precious than gold which perisheth.

And so, afflictions are made subservient to the confirmation of hope. Hope is strengthened by anticipated and not by present enjoyments. Hope that is seen is not hope. The privation of expected blessings and the endurance of positive evils give longing for the time when those shall begin and these end.

And as faith is increased and hope confirmed by affliction, so is love perfected. As afflictions are evidences of God's tender regard for the righteous so are they pledges of

the relationship he sustains to God. "For whom the Father loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement whereof all are partakers then are ye bastards and not sons." And these proofs of God's regard, unless destroyed by opposing influences, awaken in the heart a love for God. We love Him because he first loved us.

And as these chief graces find their best growth in afflictions, so the subordinate elements of christian character have here their perfection. From faith, springs holy joy, and trust, and patience in its perfect exercise. From hope comes quiet waiting—and wise indifference to the world's pleasures and its pains. And in love is rooted that spirit which, while it fills the world with benefactions, bestows upon its possessor heaven's richest blessings. And so it is seen that the chastenings of the righteous, which for the

present are not joyous but grievous, yield for him the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

It must be remembered that the Christian is not exposed to trial fortuitously.* His afflictions are all by the appointment and permission of God; and even though they are many, he has for his comfort the reflection that since they are under the control of a Being infinite in wisdom and of a Father infinitely gracious and compassionate, they can, of necessity, be no more in number nor greater in degree than is indispensable for his highest good and final preservation. The means which God employs for the accomplishment of his purposes are simply adequate—neither too limited nor too extensive. We have seen the purpose of God concerning his children is their perfection and a means

* Paul in addressing his Epistle to the church at Thessalonica, speaks of the provision he had made for them that they might be established and comforted concerning their faith, that no man might be moved by his afflictions; “for,” said he, “yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.”

largely employed for this work is affliction. Therefore, the afflictions of the righteous can be no more in number nor greater in degree than is indispensable for the one called to their exercise. Believing this, all who fear God and eschew evil may say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!" In deepest affliction the Christian should have unshaken confidence in God. For He who planteth the lily of the valley and watereth it with the dews of heaven, He who feedeth the birds of the air and knoweth the fall of the least, He whose tender mercies are over all his works will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax.

"A bruised reed he will not break,
Afflictions *all* his children feel;
He wounds them for his mercy's sake—
He wounds to heal."

And as the refiner, in removing the dross from the precious metal, places it in the crucible and watches over it until the greatest brightness is attained, so God, in suffering his children to pass through affliction, vouch-

safes his care to preserve and keep until, free from the remains of the carnal mind, the image of the heavenly is seen.

The righteous is defended and supported in every affliction. Darkness had gathered round the patriarch's tent; the man of God was stretched in deep repose within. Great victories against his enemies had been achieved, for the Lord of hosts was his defense, and the Holy One of Israel his king. A cloud seemed resting on his brow as if of trouble. When Lo! The Word of the Lord, the second Person of the Trinity appeared, saying, "Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."

But what God was to Abram, he is to every one who is a partaker of the like precious faith of Abram—a shield, a defense, an exceeding high tower, whereunto he may continually resort. God's children are furnished with complete armor, weapons offensive and defensive, that they may fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life. Christ himself is the Captain of

their salvation, and through him they are made more than conquerors.

The righteous is supported under every affliction. Though he fall, he is not utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. Has death entered and taken from his dwelling the idol of his heart? With tears of sorrow are mingled those of holy joy, and he can say, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" For the promise in its fulfilment has come—"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Is he persecuted for righteousness sake? But the kingdom of God is established in his heart, the kingdom which is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and which is the earnest and counterpart of the kingdom of glory, so he rejoices and is exceeding glad! Does disease fasten upon him and bring him to a bed of languishing and distress? Then his heavenly Father makes all his bed in his sickness, and though it be but a wretched pallet of straw,

it is made to be softer than a bed of eider down. Do the sorrows of death compass him, and the pains of the grave get hold upon him? Then, as sinks the sun of life, the Sun of Righteousness arises, and O, what brightness sheds around! With joyous exultation he exclaims, "I fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me!"

"His God supports him in his final hour;
His final hour brings glory to his God.
We gaze, we weep mixed tears of grief and joy.
Amazement strikes; devotion burns to flame—
Christians admire and infidels believe!"

2. The Righteous in his Deliverance.

Thus have we seen the righteous in his affliction, and thus do we behold him as his deliverance comes. We only know the end of his faith, the fruition of his hopes and the reward of his love as they are revealed in the Word of God.

With what patience and gladness the Christian can bear his trial when he remembers that it is so speedily to end.

Besides realizing that afflictions are of God's permitting, besides his assurance of safety and support under them, he is also promised a happy and final release. The work is soon accomplished, and he is then admitted to the joy of his Lord.

I once had occasion to pass through a dense and lonely wood. It was night; but the full-orbed moon gave a mid-day lustre to all around. My path, at times so light and easy to pursue, was occasionally made indistinct by the thick foliage overhanging it. And sometimes I was inclined to retrace my steps, lest, in the darkness, I might wander and be lost. Persevering, the shades became less frequent and less intense, the way grew more and more open until I came into the cleared field.

Is there not a resemblance between the path in the woods and the Christian's path from earth to heaven? He walks the narrow way with ease until afflictions come, and then it is by watching only he keeps from straying. And when God conceals his face with frown-

ing providences and troubles are increased, all light is gone, and faith alone becomes his guide. And often as he is about to enter these passages of trial and darkness, he is half inclined to retrace his steps, make shipwreck of faith, and relinquish his hope of one day reaching heaven. But encouragement comes, and, pressing forward with renewed energy, he soon finds his path is that of the just which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Dear reader, are yours the afflictions of the righteous? Do you seek, daily, the true end of your being? Do you live, not as the beast lives, that you may enjoy the things which support existence, but that you may have a nobler life above? Have you learned with joy to suffer the loss of all things, counting them but dross, if you may have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus here, and a home with him at last? Do you sing—

“ O what are all my sufferings here,
If, Lord, thou count me meet

With that enraptured host t' appear,
And worship at thy feet!
Give joy or grief, give ease or pain,
Take life or friends away,
But let me find them all again
In that eternal day?"

Keep in mind that none can expect to enter the world of bliss, but those who are willing to suffer the afflictions of the righteous.

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

Of all the countless multitude seen of John in his vision, there was not one who came not up through great tribulation. Therefore are they before the throne, serving God day and night in his temple!

Beloved, but afflicted one; be of good cheer! The work of faith will soon be done, and a crown of bright glory is thine. Do not forget that—

"All whom God does glorify,
And raise o'er sun and stars on high,
He leads through depths and darkness here!"

When afflictions press hard upon thee, say

with one of old—"He knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Thy wounded soul that has been crushed

"by pain and smart,
Must still be cleansed by Sorrow's art,
Ere it will yield a fragrance sweet,
Ere it will shine, a jewel meet
To lay before thy dear Lord's feet."

Rejoice, inasmuch as thou art a partaker of Christ's sufferings; and then, when his glory is revealed, thou shalt be glad also, with exceeding joy!

1. Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave, and follow thee;
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
Thou from hence my all shalt be.
Perish, ev'ry fond ambition,
All I've sought, or hop'd, or known;
Yet how rich is my condition!
God, and heaven, are still my own.

2. Let the world despise, and leave me;
They have left my Saviour too;
Human hearts and looks deceive me,
Thou art not like them untrue;
And whilst thou shalt smile upon me,

God of wisdom, love, and might,
Foes may hate, and friends disown me,
Show thy face, and all is bright.

3. Go then, earthly fame, and treasure,
Come disaster, scorn, and pain ;
In thy service, pain is pleasure,
With thy favor, loss is gain.
I have called thee Abba, Father,
I have set my heart on thee :
Storms may howl, and clouds may gather,
All must work for good to me.

4. Man may trouble and distress me,
'Twill but drive me to thy breast ;
Life with trials hard may press me,
Heav'n will bring me sweeter rest.
Oh ! 'tis not in grief to harm me ;
While thy love is left to me ;
Oh ! 'twere not in joy to charm me,
Were that joy unmix'd with thee.

5. Soul, then know thy full salvation ;
Rise o'er sin, and fear, and care ;
Joy to find, in every station,
Something still to do, or bear.
Think what Spirit dwells within thee ;
Think what Father's smiles are thine ;
Think that Jesus died to win thee ;
Child of Heav'n, can'st thou repine ?

6. Haste thee on from grace to glory,
Arm'd by faith, and wing'd by pray'r ;
Heav'n's eternal day's before thee,
God's own hand shall guide thee there.
Soon shall close thy earthly mission,
Soon shall pass thy pilgrim days ;
Hope shall change to glad fruition,
Faith to sight, and pray'r to praise.

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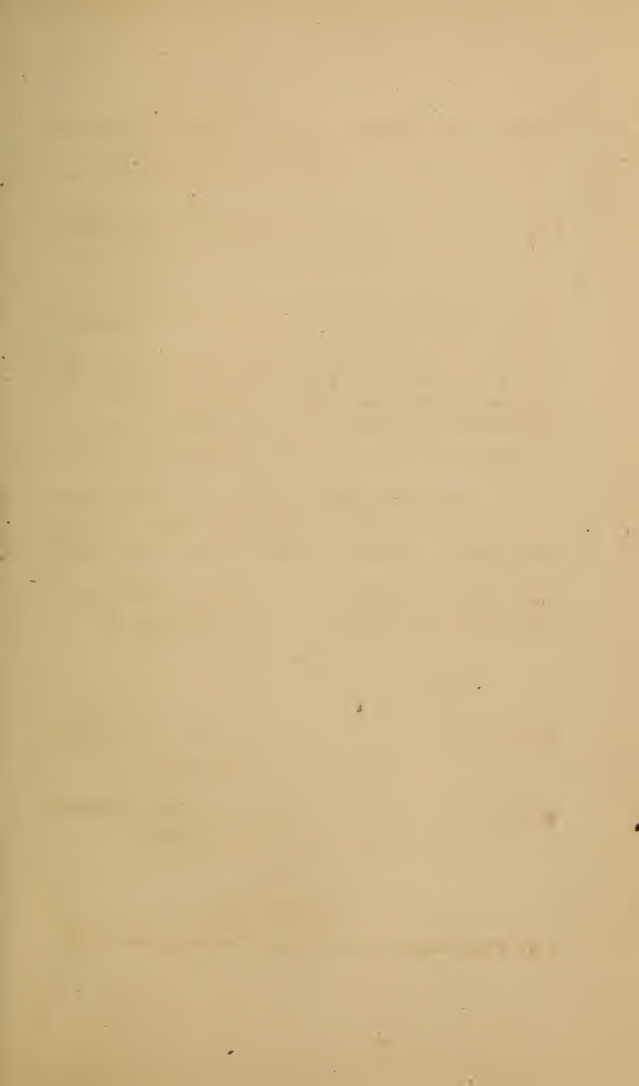
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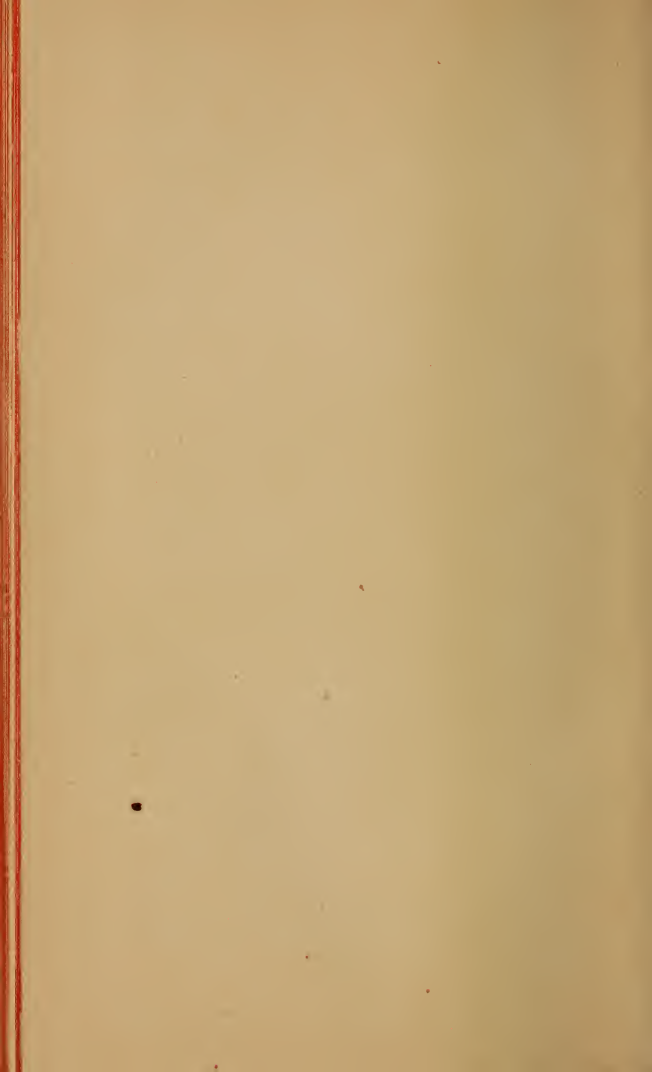
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